

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

PROJECT DETAILS
Project Title
The Representation of Childbirth and Early Labour: A Multi-Modal Analysis of Media Discourses
Project Summary
<p>The media plays a vital role in contextualizing and re-contextualizing important discourses of the day to its various audiences. Its role is to integrate the audience (members of society) into certain agreed norms, and to continually reinforce these. Media has a social responsibility to report and reflect on social issues in a responsible and ethical manner, yet cultural perceptions and societal attitudes have been shown to influence women's decisions about when to enter hospital in labour. Nearly 45% of pregnant women are admitted to UK hospitals in early labour each year. Of those, 54% receive medical interventions in the form of electronic monitoring, epidurals and caesareans, costing the NHS nearly half a billion pounds p/a (NHS 2013). The media is increasingly important as most women will only witness birth through the 'eye of a television camera' but reportedly take their cues on when to enter hospital based on what they have seen on television (Luce et al., 2016). This supervisory team's recent systematic review, the third most accessed & downloaded article for BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth in 2016, found that unrealistic media representations have the potential to influence women's behaviour around birth.</p> <p>Building on the experience of a successful media tool for suicide (Luce, 2016), the studentship will develop and validate an innovative, societal intervention to address the problem of admission in early labour. The media-based intervention will be theoretically informed and developed through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discourse Analysis—of newspapers and television programmes to determine the common discourses around childbirth and early labour in the media • Focus groups with women and families - to determine how media representations of labour and birth are interpreted. • Interview engagement with media producers - to determine whether the media can be harnessed to correct misinformation and change the discourse around labour and birth. • Stakeholder workshop – to validate the tools for the media intervention. <p>The studentship will advance our understanding of the relationship between the media, culture and health-related behaviour and develop a media intervention, which will be built around an educational resource for media professionals. Changing behaviour requires a complex intervention, thus this resource will be tested via a stakeholder workshop, towards the end of the studentship. The specifics of the intervention will be determined by the findings of the qualitative work, but it is expected that professional guidelines would be created in an effort to change the way that birth is represented in popular television programmes. It has been suggested that the media play a significant role in influencing health-seeking behaviour in childbirth; the aim of this research is to help media portray childbirth in a more responsible and ethical manner. The supervisory team has experience of developing a similar resource for media professionals in relation to Media Reporting of Suicide (WHO, 2008, 2017) and Blogging Guidelines for Suicide, both of which have proved successful (IASP and SAVE, 2017).</p>
Academic Impact
The studentship brings together the disciplines of media, sociology and midwifery to explore the impact of media representations on societal behaviour. This interdisciplinary approach will result in greater academic impact than would normally be expected from a studentship.

The outputs will include:

A roadmap for researchers to understand better the ways in which portrayals of childbirth in the media can have an impact on women's decision making processes:

- Knowledge gaps in research and policy will be identified
- Determine if societal intervention can be used to change health-seeking behaviour and reduce unnecessary hospital admission and interventions
- Guidelines for both midwives and media producers on how to dialogue with women about their expectations about childbirth
- Women will be provided tools to enhance their voices about their pregnancy via a BU Festival of Learning event
- Midwives will learn how to become more media savvy; how to engage with the media, 'sell' stories to the media, all in an effort to equip them with the skills needed to portray the correct information about childbirth that they wish to get into the public sphere

We anticipate a minimum of two academic papers for submission in leading journals such as New Media and Society (IF 2.59) and BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth (IF 2.18). In addition, the findings will be presented at national and international conferences.

Societal Impact

Admission of women to hospital in the latent phase of labour is associated with a cascade of unnecessary obstetric intervention that have a significant cost to both the NHS (a 1% rise in caesarean section rates costs the NHS £5m per year) and to individuals (unnecessary interventions lead to increased maternal and infant morbidity and mortality). There are also longer term public health implications which include a reduction in breastfeeding rates among women with caesarean section, thereby increasing the risk of childhood obesity.

The creation of guidelines will benefit clinical midwives, media academics and practitioners, colleagues from the National Childbirth Trust, the Birth Trauma Association, the Royal College of Midwives, Association for Improvements in the Maternity Services and local Health Trusts. These guidelines will teach midwives and the media how to dialogue with women about their expectations about childbirth. The research behind the guidelines will help midwives and clinicians understand the motivations behind women's requests for interventions in childbirth and how to discuss with them better and safer ways to deliver their babies.

Training Opportunities

The training programme will be tailored to the needs of the PhD student and directed by primary supervisor Dr Ann Luce with support from co-supervisors Prof Vanora Hundley and Prof Edwin van Teijlingen. The programme will include access to the Researcher Development Framework provided through BU's Graduate School and will have the following objectives: (1) Formal training in discourse analysis through participation in the Centre for the Study of Journalism, Culture and Community seminar and workshop series at Bournemouth University, as well as external training at the National Centre for Research Methods at the University of Southampton; (2) Formal training in focus groups through FHSS masterclass run by Prof van Teijlingen; (3) Transferable skills in research skills, networking, communication and presentation will be developed through seminars and conference presentations, and in preparing and submitting peer-reviewed publications. The student will participate as part of the research team on midwifery and media, learning website management skills, as well as skills in social media and dissemination of research. The student will take the PG Cert via Teach@BU, leading to a PGCHE, and will assist on undergraduate units within the School of Journalism, English and Communication mentored by Dr Ann Luce.

The student will benefit from the local, national and international networks of the supervisors. The student will be encouraged to play an active role in the the Media, Communication and Cultural Studies Association Postgraduate Network, which could include taking on leadership roles, and running conferences and seminars. In maternal health, the student will have the opportunity to join the International Early Labour Group, which includes a group exploring the impact of televising childbirth.

SUPERVISORY TEAM	
First Supervisor	Dr Ann Luce
Additional Supervisors	Professor Vanora Hundley Professor Edwin van Teijlingen
Recent publications by supervisors relevant to this project	<p>Luce, A., Hundley, V. van Teijlingen, E. (2017). Media and Midwifery. London: Palgrave (In Progress)</p> <p>Luce, A. Hundley, V. van Teijlingen, E. (2017). The Portrayal of Childbirth and Pregnancy in the Media. In Media & Midwifery, Luce, A., Hundley, V. and van Teijlingen, E. (eds) London: Palgrave. (In Progress)</p> <p>Ridden, S., Edlund, S., Luce A., Hundley, V, van Teijlingen, E. (2017). Midwives' Engagement with the Media. In Media & Midwifery, Luce, A., et al. (eds). London: Palgrave. (In Progress)</p> <p>Luce, A. Hundley, V., van Teijlingen, E., Woodhead, K. (2017). Social Media & Midwifery: What's being posted? Media & Midwifery, y Luce, A., et al. (eds). London: Palgrave. (In Progress)</p> <p>van Teijlingen E, Simkhada P, Luce A, Hundley V (2016) Media, Health & Health Promotion in Nepal. J Manmohan Memorial Institute of Health Sciences 2 (1): 70-75.</p> <p>Luce, A., Cash, M, Hundley, V., Cheyne, H, van Teijlingen, E. et al. (2016) "Is it realistic? The portrayal of pregnancy and childbirth in the media. BMC Pregnancy & Childbirth, 16(1).</p> <p>Luce, A. (2016). The Bridgend Suicides: Suicide and the Media. London: Palgrave</p> <p>Sharma S, van Teijlingen E, Belizan J, Hundley V, et al. (2016) Measuring what works: evaluation of women's groups on maternal health uptake in rural Nepal. PLOS ONE 11(5):e0155144.</p> <p>Sharma S, van Teijlingen E, Hundley V, et al. (2016) Dirty & 40 days in the wilderness: Eliciting childbirth & postnatal cultural practices & beliefs in Nepal. BMC Pregnancy & Childbirth 16:147</p> <p>Hanley GE, Munro S, Greyson D, Gross MM, Hundley V, et al. (2016) Diagnosing onset of labor: A systematic review of definitions in the research literature. BMC Pregnancy & Childbirth, 16(71).</p> <p>Hundley V, van Teijlingen E, & Luce A. (2015) Do midwives need to be more media savvy? MIDIRS Midwifery Digest 25:1:5-10.</p> <p>Hundley V, Duff E, Dewberry J, Luce A, van Teijlingen E. (2014) Fear in childbirth: are the media responsible? MIDIRS Midwifery Digest 24:4:444-447.</p> <p>Hundley V, Phipps B, Treadwell M, Baker C, Horne J, and van Teijlingen E. (2013) Intervention in childbirth: What's wrong with letting women choose? The Practising Midwife 16(11): 11-13.</p>

INFORMAL ENQUIRIES
To discuss this opportunity further, please contact Dr Ann Luce via email: aluce@bournemouth.ac.uk

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Studentship candidates must demonstrate outstanding academic potential with preferably a 1st class honours degree and/or a Master's degree with distinction or equivalent Grade Point Average. An IELTS (Academic) score of 6.5 minimum (with a minimum 5.5 in each component) is essential for candidates for whom English is not their first language. In addition to satisfying basic entry criteria, BU will look closely at the qualities, skills and background of each candidate and what they can bring to their chosen research project in order to ensure successful completion.

HOW TO APPLY

Please complete the online application form by **10th May 2017**. Further information on the application process can be found at: www.bournemouth.ac.uk/studentships